

How to Manage Leftover Paint

An average of two gallons of household paint is sold for each person in the United States each year. That's a lot of paint! Too much of that paint ends up in our nation's landfills because people needlessly throw it away. But you can help. Follow these steps to wisely use and dispose of your leftover paint.

1. Buy Only The Paint You Need

Reduce the chance of having paint leftover in the first place. Ask your paint retailer to help you estimate the amount of paint you'll need based on the size (square footage) of the area that you are painting. Many retailers even have online paint calculators that will do the math for you!

2. Use Up All Your Paint

If you have a third of a gallon or so leftover, why not keep painting until you use it all? Freshen up a hallway or apply an extra coat to the ceiling. Or you can mix smaller quantities of similar latex paint colors to use as an undercoat on larger jobs.

3. Store Paint So It Lasts

Want to keep leftover paint on hand for touch-ups, small projects or crafts? When properly stored, paint can last for years. Cover the opening with plastic wrap, and make sure the lid fits securely. Here's the key step: ***store the paint can upside down***. With the plastic wrap in place, the paint will create a tight seal around the lid, keeping the paint fresh until you need it again.

4. Donate or Exchange Your Paint

If you can't find another use your leftover paint, donate it to neighborhood associations, theater groups, schools, churches, or neighbors who need or want it.

5. As a Last Resort...Dispose of Paint Properly

If your leftover paint is unusable or too scant an amount to save, make sure you dispose of it properly.

- **Dry leftover latex-based paint and discard it with your regular trash.** Remove the lid and let your leftover latex paint air dry away from children and pets. You may stir in a cup of cat litter to speed drying. You may then dispose of the dried paint along with your normal trash.
- **Save leftover oil-based ("alkyd") paint for collection.** Solvent-based paint should not be discarded with normal trash. Instead, save it for the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day. For more information, visit www.recycle.dpw.dc.gov or dial the Recycling Hotline at (202) 645-8245.

Courtesy of the National Paint and Coatings Association